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ABSTRACT

Eight case studies were conducted and analyzed by the East Midlands (England) Regional Curriculum Base in order to assist trainers in examining their approach to curriculum, to consider how it might be changed in light of the Further Education Unit curriculum model, and to identify good practice. Some of the issues identified were the following: (1) marginality--many of the trainees were involved only part time and were not very concerned initially with curriculum development; (2) strategies to increase understanding of the curriculum development process included deciding on working terminology, using a practical approach, building on existing skills, and improving essential skills; (3) the management of the training process was the key to the application of the concept of curriculum development in the training courses; and (4) a variety of approaches, such as microteaching, case studies, discussion, and work-based assignments, were used to ensure that the newly developed skills of curriculum management were translated into practice. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the training through teaching practice observation, analysis of written reports, questionnaires and interviews, discussions with tutors and employers, and consideration of practical evidence showed that the curriculum development skills were being put to use by the trainees. (KC)

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TRAINING FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Recent developments in the qualifications structure and the increased emphasis on the assessment of prior learning, guidance and individually negotiated learning programmes suggest the need for change in approaches to curriculum development. FEU's curriculum development model includes the processes of: determining values and analysing client needs, designing the learning process, implementing teaching and learning, and evaluation and review. In the past, the role of many staff focused on implementing the teaching and learning process, but many are now having to be involved to a greater extent in the analysis of clients' educational needs, curriculum design and evaluation and review.

This bulletin draws on the outcomes of an FEU project (RP364) which was set up to investigate ways in which knowledge of, understanding of and practice in the whole curriculum development process could form the nucleus of the curriculum for FE staff development. It should be of particular relevance to advisers, staff development officers and trainers, but also of interest to curriculum planners and managers and to individual teachers.

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THE PROJECT

The project was undertaken by the East Midlands Regional Curriculum Base. The aims were to assist trainers to examine their approach to curriculum development, to consider how it might be changed or adapted in the light of the FEU model and to identify good practice.

The method for the project work included the identification, from a range of training courses in the East Midlands, of eight case studies. A series of consultative seminars was held with the case study organisers and subsequent changes and adaptations of the training courses were recorded.

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The case studies selected were:

- M.Ed, Nottingham University;
- Regional Stage 2 Adult Education Teachers' Certificate, Northamptonshire LEA;
- City and Guilds 725 Course, Derby Accreditated Training Centre;
- Training for Experienced Tutors, WEA East Midlands District;
- Training Course for Keep Fit Tutors, East Midlands Branch of the Keep Fit Association;
- Post Experience Teaching Course for Social Workers, Nottingham University;
- City and Guilds 730 Course, Boston College of Further Education;
- an in-service course for teachers of unemployed adults at Broxstowe College of Further Education.

In order to achieve the aims of the project, certain general questions had to be addressed:

- What were the perceptions of the concept of curriculum development held by the case study trainers?
- What were the methods employed by the trainers to introduce the concept of curriculum development to trainees?
- What were the barriers to transmission and investigation of the concept of curriculum development?
- What strategies were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the training methods?

ISSUES ARISING FROM THE CASE STUDIES

The selection of case studies, representing a broad spectrum of courses for staff working in a variety of education and training contexts, made it difficult, in some instances, to draw general conclusions regarding the application of the curriculum development model to training courses. There were, however, certain issues which were highlighted and these are discussed below.

Marginality

Many of the trainees on the case study courses were involved in the education and training of adults on a part-time basis only. This perhaps partially explained the emphasis in several case studies on training for implementation, i.e. teaching and learning processes. Curriculum development as a whole process was not felt, at least initially, to be of central concern.

Several trainers working on the case studies attempted to encourage a change of attitude and increase understanding of the curriculum development process. Strategies used included:

- translating the language, e.g. trainees themselves deciding on the working terminology;
- linking with familiar concepts, e.g. starting with familiar territory such as session planning;
- the use of a practical approach;
- building on existing skills, e.g. extensive experience of formal education;
- building up essential skills e.g. study skills

Approaches to the concept of curriculum development

The case studies did not share a common understanding of the concept of curriculum development. In particular, in one or two case studies, the trainers did not accept the systems analysis of curriculum development used by FEU. This inevitably affected the approach to the application of the concept of curriculum development in training courses. However, where the systems model of curriculum development was used, most trainers found it a useful framework for training course work and explored the concept in group work, case studies and course evaluation.

Focusing on a student-centred approach to training seemed to assist trainers in the application of the concept of curriculum development.

Course style - the management of process

The management of the training process was the key to the application of the concept of curriculum development in the training courses. The case studies illustrated a range of course management styles. Particular activities seemed to assist groups in an understanding of curriculum development. These activities were: enhancing the growth of autonomy, negotiation, achieving relevance, developing feelings of ownership and practice in handling concepts. Facilitating these activities required close consideration of the management of groups. The case studies indicated that the knowledge,

understanding and skills derived from these activities could not be taught as discrete elements of a course but could be demonstrated as part of the course process.

Embedding curriculum development skills into practice

A range of methods was used in the case studies to ensure that newly developed skills of curriculum management were translated to practice. Central to these methods was the use of the trainees' working contexts and the recognition of, and building on, existing skills. The methods used included: microteaching, case studies, discussion and work-based assignments.

Microteaching was used in one case study as an important vehicle for beginning the development of evaluative skills. On one course, trainees were given the FEU model and asked to test it through the simulated situation of designing an adult education programme for a particular area. This resulted in a consideration of policy and needs analysis.

Discussion was found to be particularly useful for clarifying the concept of curriculum development and enabling trainees to reinterpret and gain ownership of the ideas. On one case study trainees were then asked to produce their own checklists for curriculum development in their workplaces.

Evaluating the effectiveness of training

The case studies sought to evaluate the effectiveness of training through teaching practice observation, analysis of written reports, questionnaires and interviews, discussions with tutors and employers and a consideration of practical evidence.

The evaluations carried out showed a variety of observed or reported changes, including the development of confidence and learning management skills, application of the curriculum development model in the workplace, developing awareness of student needs, increased use of evaluation techniques and a general growth in process management skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the case study reports and the analysis of issues arising from the case study work, the project staff drew up the following recommendations for trainers to assist them in developing a systematic approach to curriculum development.

Training courses

- Trainers must recognise that the process of a training course is often a large measure of its product.
- Trainees should be made aware of the course as a process model. They should understand their own role within it and in particular the productive part they can play in negotiation.
- Trainers must be aware that training courses are concerned to a large degree with the personal growth of the trainees. The structure of the course must give trainees the opportunity for growing autonomy.
- Trainers should plan courses recognising that training skills are more effectively embedded into practice if they are taught in a context to which the trainees can relate.
- Trainers must recognise the trainees' need to find accessible and to 'own' the materials they are working with. This has implications for level, context and language.
- Trainers should encourage trainees to learn through experience.
- In training courses it is almost always better to base theory on practice, rather than practice on theory.

Training the trainers

- Trainers need to be skilled process managers. Training courses must develop such skills as a matter of priority.
- Trainers need to develop evaluation skills, be comfortable with a continuous involvement in the process and understand how to manage productively the information they receive.
- Trainers need to understand the process of negotiation. Training courses must develop skills to enable them to carry out the process.
- Trainers need to understand curriculum development and how the management of process can affect development in action.

- Trainers need to identify an appropriate approach to curriculum management skills to suit the needs of their trainees - they must understand how trainees view their training role.
- All trainers should experience regular retraining.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Other conclusions from the project included:

- Training courses which are based on the testing of competences must take account of the skills involved in process management.
- There is a need to find methods for evaluating the effectiveness of training courses, in both the long and the short term, and train trainers in their use.
- There is a need to develop structures for informal and formal support for trainers on a regional basis, e.g. networks and quality circles.

COMMENTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

FEU welcomes comments on this bulletin and the issues it raises. These should be addressed to:

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Further copies of this bulletin and copies of the full report *Curriculum Development in the Training of Adult Educators and Trainers* can be obtained from the FEU Information Centre at the above address (tel. ext. 243).

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